

Thalassotherapy – Definition and Criteria of the ESPA (European Spas Association)

Preamble

The purpose of the following criteria is to provide a uniform European definition of the term thalassotherapy in order to guarantee high quality standards and to establish the term as a brand name. At the same time, the definition is meant to counter the inflationary use of the term thalassotherapy.

Thalassotherapy covers a wide spectrum, ranging from the medical treatment of chronic illnesses, such as respiratory or skin diseases, to prophylaxis in healthy individuals. It is also a component of wellness programs. According to item 1, indication in these cases consists in toning-up and improving physical fitness (roboration).

The term thalassotherapy shall be used only if the following definitions and prerequisites are met and the following measures are offered or taken:

- 1. Definition: Thalassotherapy** is an integrated plan for therapy, prevention, and health promotion. The plan shall be implemented for defined indications under medical care and with the participation of qualified expert staff.
- 2. Therapeutic location immediately by the sea**
Thalassotherapy shall be carried out in places where the maritime climate has an immediate effect.
- 3. Sea water**
The sea shall be used for bathing in natural waters. Suitable sea water that is drawn locally shall be used for inhaling and/or bathing, e.g. in a bathtub or a swimming pool.
- 4. Marine products**
It is possible to use mud or algae etc. for different applications.
- 5. Low-allergen and clean sea air**
The quality of the air must warrant that extended stays in the open air will represent a relieving factor.
- 6. Heliotherapy**
Natural solar radiation shall primarily be used for heliotherapy. In adverse weather conditions artificial UV irradiation may supplement heliotherapy.

7. Exposure to the climate and motion therapy

Exposure to the climate and motion therapy shall be carried out in fixed regimens in the zone close to the shoreline.

8. Associated health-promoting measures

Associated health measures, emphasizing relaxation, change of nutrition, and physical exercise shall be carried out to improve overall physical fitness.

The above-mentioned criteria represent minimum standards, i.e. they can be complemented by additional measures, such as local specialized offers. However, it is not permissible to fall short of these standards. The examples mentioned under the separate items are by no means exhaustive, but are simply meant as illustrations.

The criteria shall be drafted within the respective national and regional legal framework. This applies to labor and professional law, amongst others, and especially to regulations and laws on hygiene.

These criteria were drafted by a working group of the Committee for Thalasso-therapy of the German Spas Association (V. Harms, MD, H. Schuh, MD, Prof. C. Stick, MD) and were discussed at a plenary session of the 1st European Conference on Thalassotherapy in Rostock Warnemünde on January 12, 2002. Suggestions made by the international participants have been taken into consideration in the present draft.

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